

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A method for registering a usage value, representing use of a commodity, comprising the steps of:

non-volatilely storing at least one rate value for usage of a commodity, said rate value being valid within a predetermined time span;

obtaining respective measured values, using a mathematical algorithm, representing delivery of said commodity to a use location and output of said commodity from said use location;

obtaining time data relating to usage of said commodity at said use location and generating at least one usage value representing usage of said commodity at said use location, from said time data and said measured values;

generating a monetary charge for said usage of said commodity at said use location from said usage value and said rate value;

generating an electronic message that includes at least said charge;

forming a check code for protecting said electronic message;

generating a protected message that contains said electronic message and said check code; and

establishing electronic communication with a recipient at a location remote from said use location and electronically transmitting said protected message as a dataset to said recipient.

2. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of establishing said electronic communication with said recipient comprises making an initial attempt to establish said electronic communication with said recipient and, if said initial

attempt is unsuccessful at establishing said electronic communication, repeatedly attempting to establish said electronic communication with said recipient until expiration of a predetermined limit.

Claim 3 has been amended as follows:

3. (Currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said dataset is a first dataset, and comprising the additional steps of:

at said recipient, upon receiving said first dataset, checking said first dataset for authenticity and generating an enable code as a second dataset;

at said recipient, cryptographically protecting said enable code with an electronic signature of said recipient and transmitting said dataset with said electronic signature from said recipient to said use location as a return message; and

at said use location, checking said enable code for authenticity ~~be~~ by verifying said electronic signature.

4. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 3 comprising the additional steps, at said use location, of:

if said enable code is authentic, resetting said charge to zero; and

if said enable code is not authentic, inhibiting further usage of said commodity at said use location.

5. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of generating said electronic message comprises including said usage value and said time data in said electronic message together with said charge.

6. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising the additional step of generating said usage value at an end of a predetermined time segment for use of said commodity.

7. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 6 comprising forming said time segment periodically.

8. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 6 comprising forming said time segment dependent on an event related to usage of said commodity.

9. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising the additional steps of:

identifying an event related to generation of said charge;

upon an occurrence of said event, calculating said charge to obtain an event-related charge; and

storing said event-related charge together with the usage value that was employed to generate said event-related charge.

10. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 9 wherein the step of identifying said event comprises identifying a change of said rate value as said event.

11. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 9 wherein the step of identifying said event comprises identifying a change in said usage value relative to a predetermined reference.

Claim 12 has been amended as follows:

12. (Currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising analyzing said usage value use-data to identify usage behavior involving said usage of said commodity at said use location.

13. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising generating an authentication code as said check code.

14. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 13 comprising selecting said authentication code from the group consisting of a hash code and an MAC, and forming said authentication code according to a symmetrical encryption algorithm.

15-27 (Cancelled).